UNITED
NATIONS

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General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/54/656
S/1999/1224
7 December 1999
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ARABIC

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 43
THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fourth year

Letter dated 6 December 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government and further to our earlier letters concerning Israel's attacks on southern Lebanon and the Western Bekaa and the arbitrary practices against the civilian inhabitants in which it engages on a daily basis, I have the honour to inform you of the following:

Israeli occupation forces are maintaining their siege of the town of Ayta al-Sha'b and are continuing to harass and arrest its inhabitants in an arbitrary fashion. Between 19 and 25 November 1999 they arrested 11 residents of the town, raising to 35 the number of those abducted and detained since the siege was imposed on 17 July 1999, including three persons between the ages of 15 and 17. These hostages are in Khiyam detention centre and are being subjected to mental and physical torture.

Ayta al-Sha'b is now completely cut off from the outside world owing to its continued encirclement by Israeli forces. Over and above the practices of the occupation forces, its inhabitants are enduring shortages of foodstuffs, medical supplies and the necessities of everyday life.

My Government calls yet again for the closure of the Khiyam centre, where the methods in use are of the most repulsive and inhuman kinds that are in flagrant violation of the most elementary norms of human rights and of the fourth Geneva Convention.

In this context, it should be noted that from time to time Israel uses the expedient of releasing a number of detainees under pressure from the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross or other humanitarian organizations only to proceed to the arrest of other innocent people to face the same fate in this detention centre as those who preceded them.

The Lebanese Government strongly condemns Israel's arbitrary actions against the Lebanese civilian population, and it requests you to do your utmost to induce the Israeli authorities concerned to halt these inhuman and unlawful practices and, at last, to close down the Khiyam centre that they maintain inside Lebanese territory.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 43, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Sélim TADMOURY
Ambassador
Permanent Representative